

Tororo seed company closed



TORORO

By Faustine Odeke

Officials from the agriculture ministry on Monday closed a seed packaging company in Tororo for operating without a certification label and licence from the Government.

Accompanied by the Police, the officials raided the premises of Agro Trust Seed Company, located in Rubongi sub-county and ordered the company to close.

The move took over 200 employees of the company by surprise as the owners engaged the officials in a protracted battle for nearly three hours. The company, with over 30 tonnes of Seso III sorghum seeds, was destined to supply to South Sudan under the World Food Programme.

Moses Erongu, the senior agriculture inspector at the National Seed Certification Services, said the company was packaging seeds which had not been tested.

"We have stopped the company operations to allow them follow to the right procedure. We have also picked samples of the seeds to test for quality before we can clear them to operate," Erongu



Some of the seeds that were being packaged by the factory. Photo by Faustine Odeke

said. John Grace Sewanyana, the head of Police's crop sub-sector, said they got intelligence reports about the company's trading in

agricultural counterfeits and swung into action. Sewanyana said trading in counterfeit products has led to poverty and losses by farmers as some of the seeds

are of poor quality and fail to germinate. "The practice is common and, as such, we have impounded several tonnes of counterfeit products across the

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The company, with over 30 tonnes of Seso III sorghum seeds, was destined to supply South Sudan.

country. Several companies and shops have been closed in Soroti district," he said.

He said poor quality seeds remain a big challenge, adding that if they do not bite, then the ministry will be deemed not to be in control.

Sewanyana said they have so far opened a Police case against the company and they will be charged according to the Seed and Plant Act 2006.

Under the Act, the offender is liable to fine of 96 currency points (sh1,920,000) or imprisonment not exceeding four years or both.

Emmanuel Owori of Integrated and Demonstration Farm said the company has been the main source of livelihood for over 200 youth who were sieving and packaging the seeds.

Owori said some of the employees were students on holiday and returned to school when the term opened on Monday.

Farmers tipped

● Farmers in Mpigi district were last week trained in the use of technology in order to help them increase their farm output and profits. The one-day field study attracted farmers from the seven sub-counties of Muduuma, Kituntu, Mpigi town council, Kiringente, Nkozi, Buwama and Kamengo sub-county.

Police deployed

● Authorities in Alebtong and Otuke districts have beefed up security in the areas where the Karimojong herdsmen are currently grazing their animals. The resident district commissioner of Alebtong, Andrew Moses Awany, said on Monday that they have deployed the Police and military to avert the crimes that could occur in the area.